

O P 021135Z NOV 87
FM AMCONSUL MADRAS
TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO IMMEDIATE
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7541
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRAS 3155

1E. O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL CE INF
SUBJECT: N. RAM: LTTE CRUSHED, MAHATHAYA DEAD?

11. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

12. "THE HINDU" ASSOCIATE EDITOR N. RAM JUST RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO COLOMBO, WHERE HE INTERVIEWED JAYAWARDENE AND SPOKE TO MEMBERS OF IPKF, JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS. HE OFFERED THESE THOUGHTS TO CG AND POLECON OFF AT LUNCH NOVEMBER 2.:

13. ACCORDING TO JAYAWARDENE AND IPKF SOURCES, THE LTTE HAS BEEN CRUSHED AND IS ON THE RUN. BASED ON LTTE INTERCEPTS, RAM IS ALMOST SURE THAT MAHATHAYA (THE LTTE NO. 2) WAS KILLED IN THE ASSAULT ON CHAVAKACHERI. INTERCEPTS SAID THAT SOMEONE AT THE VERY TOP, BUT NOT PRABHAKARAN, WAS KILLED. RAM BELIEVES THAT THIS COULD ONLY DESCRIBE MAHATHAYA. LOCAL PRESS HAS REPORTED UNCONFIRMED RUMORS OF HIS DEATH. LTTE'S YOGI HAD TOLD RAM EARLIER THAT MAHATHAYA WAS LTTE'S CANDIDATE FOR CHIEF MINISTER OF THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN PROVINCE. RAM SAID THAT THE INDIAN MILITARY ALSO FOUND HIM TO BE SOMEONE WITH WHOM THEY COULD DEAL. HIS DEATH, UNLIKE PRABHAKARNA'S, WOULD BE A BLOW TO A FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS PROCESS.

14. PRABHAKARAN WAS "CERTAINLY" BEEN WOUNDED IN A SEPARATE INCIDENT, PROBABLY WHEN INDIAN PARATROOPERS LANDED NEAR HIS HEADQUARTERS. RAM ALSO FINDS IT VERY CURIOUS THAT PRABHAKARAN'S NAME HAS NOT BEEN USED AT ALL BY THE LTTE RECENTLY - "HE'S COMPLETELY OUT OF SIGHT."

15. RAM ESTIMATES THAT 1,000 LTTE FIGHTERS HAVE BEEN KILLED, INCLUDING 700 IN THE ASSAULT ON CHAVAKACHERI ALONE.

16. RAM'S BASIC VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS IN JAFFNA IS MORE POSITIVE (FROM AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE) THAN WE HAVE HEARD FROM ANY OTHER KNOWLEDGABLE SOURCE HERE. IT MUST BE CONSIDERED SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE OF HIS RECENT TRIP TO COLOMBO AND HIS EARLIER PRE-AGREEMENT CONCERN FOR THE LTTE. SUBSTANTIAL CROSS CURRENTS IN TAMIL ELITE OPINION PREVENT US FROM DISCERNING ANY "LINE" DOMINANT HERE. NO ONE HAS MUCH REAL SYMPATHY FOR THE LTTE; KARUNANIDI AND THE DMK SUPPORT THEM FOR OPPORTUNISTIC REASONS, AND EVEN MGR'S RETURN (BEING COVERED SEPTEL) HAS NOT YET CLARIFIED AIADMK THINKING ON THE SUBJECT.

17. ONE THING RAM WAS CLEAR ON: THE GOI WILL NOT BE EASILY LED INTO ANY KIND OF COMPROMISE. GURKHA TROOPS ARE SURROUNDING THE NALLUR TEMPLE NEAR JAFFNA, AND THERE WILL BE NO STAND-DOWN, SUSPENSION OF OPERATIONS, OR CEASE FIRE UNTIL THE LTTE LOUDLY AND PUBLICLY AGREES TO START HANDING OVER ARMS AND ABIDE BY THE JULY 29 AGREEMENT. RAM CONFIRMED THE EARLIER REPORTED "NECKLACE KILLINGS" OF FIVE INDIAN SOLDIERS AND THE BRUNING TO DEATH OF 13 OTHERS. HE HASTENED TO ADD THAT NONE OF THIS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED TO THE PRESS BECAUSE THE GOI WANTED TO KEEP EMOTIONS DOWN. BUT THE ARMY KNOWS, AND IT IS PRETTY BLOODY-MINDED RIGHT NOW. PRABHAKARAN OR ANY OTHER LEADERSHIP FIGURE WOULD HAVE TO "WAVE A VERY WHITE FLAG" TO SURVIVE HIS/THEIR OWN SURRENDER.

STEMPEL